

DRAFT: A BRIEF HISTORY OF LAND (EXPULSION) AND GENDERED LABOUR

An Excerpt from
**Radical Relations: Curating at the
Intersection of Social Reproduction
and Social Justice**

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(Zurich University of the Arts/University of Reading,
forthcoming 2023/24)

Part of the artistic research installation
of FIELD NARRATIVES at
The New Alphabet School edition
#Commoning at HKW Berlin
(September 2022)

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Introduction & Context of Chapter

What is the history of the gendered, racialised and classed system of care that shapes contemporary societies? What role does land ownership/dispossession play in the creation of gendered labour? What genealogies, what narratives continue to justify a contradictory, and harmful setup as the current relationship between care and the so-called productive realm of our economic system?

These questions form the historic and theoretical foundation of my dissertation that critically addresses questions of care in relation to artistic and curatorial practices. In the sections before the excerpts at display I provided an overview of how questions of care are a central feminist issue in art, society, and economy, as the ways in which care is organised directly effect questions of gender and racial equality. I argued that care acts as a prism to understand intersecting mechanisms of oppression across society. Prompted by the artist Shira Richter's workshop, as an example of my own curatorial work on care, the chapter critically analysed the intersections and tensions between artistic, activist and caring labour. It became evident that questions of care and maintenance are not only a subjects in feminist historic and contemporary artistic practices but also manifest themselves as central obstacles in

the art field, that continue to make access for women artists — mother artists in particular — utterly difficult.

The pressing question that remains after an overview of the contemporary uneven sphere of care both in the home, the labour market but also within the arts, is to critically inquire into the historic conditions and shifts of Central Europe and North America that have led to today's crisis of care.

Enjoy the read!

1. ECONOMY OF THE INVISIBLE HANDS

1.1 “Mind the Gap”: On Care, Art, and Activism (not included)

1.2 Historic Shifts: From Feudalism Towards Capitalist Relations (15th–17th Century)

Marxist feminist scholarship has contributed substantially to the unveiling of capitalism’s gendered and racialised history and the creation of on-going mechanisms of oppression.¹ Most importantly, this strand of feminist scholarly work has traced a genealogy of how the racialised, classed and gendered capitalist system came into being — and what role care-work, or social reproduction, have played in the different capitalist regimes over the past centuries, with a focus on Central Europe and North America. The importance of this feminist historiography is that it de-naturalises

women's domestic work as a natural vocation.² Fraser thus stresses the importance of critically tracing the history of how different regimes of capitalism defined and sculpted the relationship between production and reproduction — which, she claims, are the “defining features of capitalist society” and hence should be the centre of a critical analysis of capitalism.³

The historic specificities of the different capitalist regimes indicate much of how and by whom social reproduction was organised in each era;⁴ this expanded understanding of capitalism would entail both its official economy and its “non-economic” background conditions.⁵ She urges critical thinkers to ask for any given era of capitalist societies: How much of care-work is commodified? Is it supported through the state or corporations? To which degree is it located within households, neighbourhoods and/or civil society?⁶

Maria Mies' and Silvia Federici's Marxist-feminist analysis of women's social role thus goes back to the transition from feudalism to capitalism, in which they locate the emergence of patterns of oppression that are inherent to the capitalist economic system. As a key mechanism of capitalism they identify its premise of exploiting resources — such as land, nature, and socio-politically inferiorized labour according to class, race, and gender — for the goal of accumulating capital.

Directed to Karl Marx, Federici laments that his work does not include the “profound transformations that capitalism introduced in the reproduction of labour-power and the social position of women.”⁷ She continues, *[n]or does Marx’s analysis of primitive accumulation mention the ‘Great Witch-Hunt’ of the 16th and 17th centuries, although this state-sponsored terror campaign was central*

1 Tithi Battacharya edited a volume on Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) that brings together essays that “build from Marx” and that are concerned with “remapping class, recentring oppression.” In her introduction she describes SRT as an approach that displays an analytical irreverence to “visible facts” and privileges “process” instead. It is an approach that is not content to accept what seems like visible, finished entity — in this case, our worker at the gates of her workplace — but interrogates the complex network of social processes and human relations that produce the conditions of existence for that entity. (...) the fundamental insight of SRT is, simply put, that human labor is at the heart of creating or reproducing society as a whole.” Tithi Bhattacharya, *Social Reproduction Theory*, 2.

2 Louise Toupin, *Wages for Housework: A History of an International Feminist Movement, 1972-77*, 187.

3 Nancy Fraser, *Capitalism's Crisis of Care*.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., 101.

The question of how care-work is organised is certainly a question that needs to be analysed and addressed for non-capitalist regimes as well, for example the socialist regimes of the former UDSSR. Also the socialist system resulted in a double burden for women, where they were part of the waged work force but also responsible for domestic and care-labour at home — which often consumed more time than their waged full-time job, as argued by Anna Kaminsky in “(Verordnete) Emanzipation? Frauen im geteilten Deutschland”, (2019).

6 Fraser, *Capitalism's Crisis of Care*, 101.

7 Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch. Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, (2004), 63.

*to the defeat of the European peasantry, facilitating its expulsion from the lands it once held in common.*⁸

The witch-hunt of medieval times was thus seen as a mechanism to control and subordinate (peasant and artisan) women, “who in their economic and sexual independence constituted a threat for the emerging bourgeois order,”⁹ as Maria Mies argues.¹⁰ Art historian Sigrid Schade makes a case to understand the depictions of witches — in the form of illustrations, wooden and copperplate engravings, or panel paintings from around 1500 by Dürer, Cranach and Baldung — as key elements of the mass inquisition: These illustrations, as part of the tracts, manifested and reproduced the image of the “power of the witch” and hence intensified their inquisitorial persecution.¹¹

The witch-hunt, the expulsion from land and the introduction of the wage can be seen as central patriarchal-capitalists strategies that forced upon a radical reorganisation of social life, gender hierarchies, and divisions of labour: Prior to capitalist expansion, access to land and commons were the basis for a different social order; though not void of stark hierarchies between the various social stratifications. Despite the commons being dismissed as a source of laziness and disorder in 16th century literature, they served a central role in the reproduction of small-scale farmers or cottars. Their access to meadows and woods allowed them to keep cattle, gather timber, and various foods — and provided space for encounter and collective decision-making and work cooperatives:

The commons were the material foundation upon which peasant solidarity and sociality could thrive (...). The social function of the commons was especially important for women, who, having less title to land and less social power, were more dependent on

*them for their subsistence, autonomy, and sociality.*¹²

Federici argues that women’s access to communal assets and land in pre-capitalist Europe tempered women’s subordination to men, “while in the new capitalist regime women themselves became the commons, as their work was defined as a natural resource, laying outside the sphere of market relations.”¹³ The new organisation of work had turned women, particularly working class women — as bourgeoisie women were “privatised” by men and the domestic sphere — into communal goods, which rendered their activities as non-work, “as a natural resource, available to all, no less than the air we breathe or the water we drink.”¹⁴

Federici describes the expropriation of communal lands as a central historic moment in the transition from feudalism to capitalism during the 14th-16th century. Simultaneously to the global expansion of colonialism, land privatisation began

8 Ibid.

Note on primitive accumulation by Silvia Federici: "In other words, primitive accumulation consisted in an immense accumulation of labour-power - "dead labour" in the form of stolen goods, and "living labour" in the form of human beings made available for exploitation - realised on a scale never before matched in the course of history." Ibid., 64.

9 Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, (1986), 81.

10 Within feminist literature, art and curating the figure of the witch has become a symbol of empowerment and anti-capitalist resistance. For example, the exhibition HEXEN! (2021) at Kunsthalle Tirol, curated by Nina Tabassomi, recently brought together artistic positions that reflect on and expand on the figure of the witch within a contemporary context. The scholar Kristen J. Sollee authors the book "Witches, Sluts, Feminists: Conjuring the Sex Positive" (2017), in which she analyses the archetypes of "witch" and "slut" and how they have been used to police female sexuality and punish women. In the context of Sollee's book, and other feminist positions, these terms are reclaimed as positive affirmations. Sigrid Schade's publication *Schadenzauber und die Magie des Körpers: Hexenbilder der frühen Neuzeit* from 1983 provides a feminist art historical account of witches in the Early Modern Age.

11 Sigrid Schade, *Schadenzauber und die Magie des Körpers*, (1983).

12 Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 71.

13 Ibid., 97.

14 Ibid.

in Europe of the 15th century. As part of this international phenomenon, European merchants had expropriated much of the land of the Canary Islands to turn them into sugar plantations in 16th century;¹⁵ the “slave-raiding in Africa”¹⁶ came with excessive land loss, and in the 17th century one third of indigenous lands of the Americas had been expropriated by the Spaniards.

In Europe, the land privatisation occurred through different means, including the evictions of tenants, rent increases, increased state taxation that forced the tenants to choose between debt or the sale of land.¹⁷ These developments were forced upon the communities either through war or religious reform, and undermined their capacities for subsistence.¹⁸ In the 16th century English lords and rich farmers eliminated communal land property to expand their holdings under the term “enclosures.”¹⁹

The loss of land can be seen as a pivot point for a variety of shifts in how societies changed in relation to labour. All workers became much more dependent on the wage, as their landless condition provided the employer with more leverage to cut their pay and lengthen the working day: *Not surprisingly, with land expropriation came a change in the workers’ attitude towards the wage. While in the Middle Ages wages could be viewed as an instrument of freedom (in contrast to the compulsion*

*of the labor services), as soon as access to land came to an end wages began to be viewed as instruments of enslavement.*²⁰

Women’s lives were especially negatively impacted by the enclosures as the economization of life had become much more difficult for women to support themselves, confining them more and more to the sphere of reproduction — at a point in time when this labour began to be devalued completely.²¹

*With the demise of the subsistence economy that had prevailed in pre-capitalist Europe, the unity of production and reproduction which has been typical of all societies based on production-for-use came to an end, as these activities became the carries of different social relations and were sexually differentiated. In the new monetary regime, only production-for-market was defined as a value-creating activity, whereas the reproduction of the worker began to be considered as valueless from an economic viewpoint and even ceased to be considered as work.*²²

Like today, reproductive labour only earned a wage — though at lower rates — when it was performed outside of the home for a higher classed social group.²³ In this sexual division of labour, the social and economic function of the reproduction of labour power in the private homes and its essential function in the accumulation of capital had become invisible — and until today continues to be mystified as “women's labour”, as women's natural vocation to provide care.²⁴

After Federici's historic analysis of the transition from feudalism to capitalism from the 14th century onwards, Nancy Fraser's detailed analysis of the recent decades (with a specific focus on the US context) is useful as it distinguishes between three central capitalist regimes: 1) the so-called liberal capitalism of the nineteenth century, 2) the

15 Ibid., 68.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., 69.

20 Ibid., 72.

21 Ibid., 74.

22 Ibid., 74/75.

23 Ibid., 75.

24 Ibid.

state-managed regime of the mid-twentieth, and 3) the financialised capitalism of the present day. With each capitalist regime, she claims, comes a specific organisation of social reproduction that produces a distinctive set of gender and family ideals. The liberal-capitalist vision of the 19th century created the ideal of the “separate spheres,” the social-democratic model of the 20th century created the “family wage,” while today's neoliberal financial capitalism fosters the “two-earner-family.”²⁵ Fraser concludes: “In a nutshell: liberal capitalism privatized social reproduction; state-managed capitalism partially socialized it; financialized capitalism is increasingly commodifying it.”²⁶

Whilst the introduction has sketched the contemporary status quo of financialised capitalism, the next section will focus on the 19th century, that produced formative gendered and racialised ideals.

1.3 Devalued Labour: On Housewifization and Colonization (18th–19th Century)

Characterised by on-going industrial exploitation in Europe with colonial expropriation across the globe, Nancy Fraser labels the 19th century as the regime of liberal competitive capitalism.²⁷ The state played a rather peripheral role that left the workers to reproduce themselves “autonomously”. This era also produced a new, bourgeois imaginary of domesticity and femininity.²⁸ In the early Victorian period from 1780 onwards with its peak in 1850, the so-called “doctrine of separate spheres”²⁹ had become central to the moral, social, political and economic ordering of British society, in other European countries, and later on in the US.³⁰ According to the historian Susie L. Steinbach, before industrialization the home and workplace had not been separate

but rather overlapping spaces in which both men and women worked side by side — even though they were not executing the same tasks.³¹ Thus the emerging ideology of the Victorian Era in 19th century in Britain played a central role in shaping gendered norms, which still affects traditional roles within families today.

*The doctrine of separate spheres stated that men and women inhabited different roles in society. Men were essentially public creatures; women were private creatures. Men went out to do battle in the worlds of business and politics; their identities centered on being workers or professionals, husbands and fathers who were good providers. Women remained at home, in the domestic sphere, where they ran their households, raised their children, and cared for their husbands. Men were fundamentally independent; women were dependent. Men were by nature sexually predatory; women were sexually passionless. Men were socially and politically dominant; women were morally superior.*³²

Intensified with the influence of the evangelical religion women were responsible for the home and child-rearing.³³ Women were thus regarded as the moral and spiritual centres of their families, as they were seen as “naturally maternal” beings, who would embrace motherhood.³⁴ Steinbach points to the historic assumption that women

25 Fraser, *Capitalism's Crisis of Care*.

26 *Ibid.*, (emphasis in original text).

27 Fraser, *Capitalism's Crisis of Care*, 104.

28 *Ibid.*

29 Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, (2017), 168.

30 Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 99.

31 Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 168.

32 *Ibid.*, 166.

33 *Ibid.*, 168.

34 *Ibid.*, 166.

were typically regarded as “not economic creatures,” as they were expected not to work for wages; upon their marriage they were not able to legally own property, nor to make contracts (Coverture), making them seamlessly dependent to men throughout their lives — first as daughters and later as wives.³⁵ In this light, women’s efforts were conceptualised not as “work” but rather as housekeeping:

*Men spent their adult lives working hard. Women spent their lives bearing, raising, and educating children and running households. In practice, this meant that most women worked hard too. However, their work was unpaid and was not recognized as work or as economic activity at all; instead, it was classed as domestic activity.*³⁶

The feminist scholars Gisela Bock and Barbara Duden, authored the influential essay “Arbeit aus Liebe - Liebe als Arbeit” [Labour of Love - Labour as Love] from 1977³⁷, in which they argue that “women are not only the ‘heart of the family’ but the heart of capital.”³⁸ However, historian Susie L. Steinbach argues that men, despite spending most of their days out of the house at work, were “deeply invested in the home,” as “men made the domestic sphere possible through

their work, but were rarely physically present in it”.³⁹ Nancy Fraser clearly counters this suggested causality:

*Non-waged social-reproductive activity is necessary to the existence of waged work, the accumulation of surplus value and the functioning of capitalism as such. (...) Social reproduction is an indispensable background condition for the possibility of economic production in a capitalist society.*⁴⁰

Also Bock and Duden point out that with the model of the family wage, the state or entrepreneurs receive two labourers for the price of one: Commonly in the so-called traditional setup of the nuclear family, the husband works outside of the house for a wage, enabled by the unpaid housework of his wife. In such a scenario his wage does not only cover financially for her unpaid housework but systemically hides it. Particularly in a new world order, where money had become a primary medium of power, it structurally subordinated those who do not earn wages to those who earned cash wages.⁴¹ Bock and Duden conclude: “The invisibility of domestic work is a function of its unpaid nature.”⁴²

This emerging “housewifization,”⁴³ saturated and mystified by new, domestic ideals of femininity, as a product of the Victorian ideology of the “separate spheres” was mostly adhered to by the (white) middle class.⁴⁴ The normative concepts of beauty, grace, and projections of female hysteria were manifested in the art of the 19th and 20th century, as Sigrid Schade demonstrates.⁴⁵ These heavily gendered norms became powerful enough to even influence some of the social elites and parts of the working class, who, from 1840 onwards, aimed for the goal of a wage-earning husband and a “non-working” wife, as the “angel in the house” — however, this goal remained largely unattainable for the lower classes.⁴⁶

35 Ibid., 167.

36 Ibid., 172.

37 Louise Toupin's book *Wages for Housework* (2018) includes a summary of the essay in English language on page 187-188. Bock and Duden were also key figures in the German iteration of the Wages for Housework movement [Lohn für Hausarbeit].

38 Bock, and Duden, “Arbeit aus Liebe - Liebe als Arbeit. Zur Entstehung der Hausarbeit im Kapitalismus,” 178.

39 Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 166.

40 Fraser, *Capitalism's Crisis of Care*.

41 Ibid., 102.

42 Bock, and Duden, “Arbeit aus Liebe”, 120.

43 Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, 74.

44 Fraser, *Capitalism's Crisis of Care*, 102.

45 Isa Härtel, and Sigrid Schade, “Body and Representation,” *Schriftenreihe der Internationalen Frauenuniversität* 6 (2002), 75.; ed. Ines Lindner, *Blick-Wechsel. Konstruktionen von Männlichkeit und Weiblichkeit in Kunst und Kunstgeschichte*.

46 Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 168.

Sophie Lewis regards motherhood in the US historically as an “institution of married white womanhood.”⁴⁷ Enslaved Black women weren’t publicly recognised as women, let alone mothers or Americans.⁴⁸ “No other group in America has had their identity socialised out of existence as have black women”⁴⁹, states Black feminist bell hooks.⁵⁰ Thus Black women were not able to make claims of kinship or “property to the fruits of their gestational labours.”⁵¹ Also unmarried proletarians were dispossessed of their babies through eugenic and patriarchal laws.⁵² During the 19th century, white elites on both sides of the Atlantic cultivated an ethic of a “productive maternity,” while perceiving the “excess production of babies among subaltern classes” as threatening.⁵³ Lewis argues that today “unabashed Euro-American neofascists might be the only ones willing to frame the declining `domestic` birth rate in rich nations in terms of `white genocide` explicitly.”⁵⁴

It is therefore crucial to emphasise the intricate entanglement of class, gender, and race in relation to social reproduction, that serve as oppressive mechanisms within the newly established capitalist system. From the perspective of an upper or middle class white woman, other white women lower in classes or Women of Colour were considered “fallen sisters”, as bell hooks argues.⁵⁵ She regards the devaluation of Black womanhood an extended product of sexual exploitation of Black women during slavery;⁵⁶ an image that had not altered over hundreds of years:

*During the years of Black Reconstruction, 1867-77, black women struggled to change negative images of black womanhood perpetuated by whites. Trying to dispel the myth that all black women were sexually loose, they emulated the conduct and mannerisms of white women.*⁵⁷

Caught in this contradiction, Black women in the US carry the painful history of being devalued and de-humanised, as a way for white men to justify upholding a sexist and racialised division of labour, in which white women were seen as physically and intellectually inferior to men and thus could not perform the same tasks as men: *To explain the black female's ability to survive without the direct aid of a male and her ability to perform tasks that were defined as “male” work, white males argued that black slave women were not “real” women but were masculinized sub-human creatures.*⁵⁸

African American feminist artist Betsy Saar focus lies on shifting this oppressive, de-humanizing modes of representation of Black people by white folks. Her work initially focused on the Black male body as a way to counter white feminism, yet then turned to give particular attention to the Black female body to reclaim it from the oppressive visuals of the Jim Crow era. Saar is known for her artistic approach of assemblage, where she brings together derogatory found objects that reproduce negative stereotypes of Black people in the US, and uses them in an emancipatory way. “I was recycling the imagery, in a way, from negative to positive, using the negative power against itself,” the artist states reflecting on her work.⁵⁹

47 Sophie Lewis, *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism against Family* (London: Verso Books, 2021).

48 Ibid.

49 bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*, (1982), 7; Deutsches Statistisches Bundesamt, “Wie die Zeit vergeht. Analysen zur Zeitverwendung in Deutschland.”

50 In bell hooks “Homeplace (a site of resistance)” in *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* South End Press, 1990, the author argues that the domestic sphere, despite its patriarchal order, served as a site of refuge for Black people in a world of white supremacy.

51 Lewis, *Full Surrogacy Now*.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

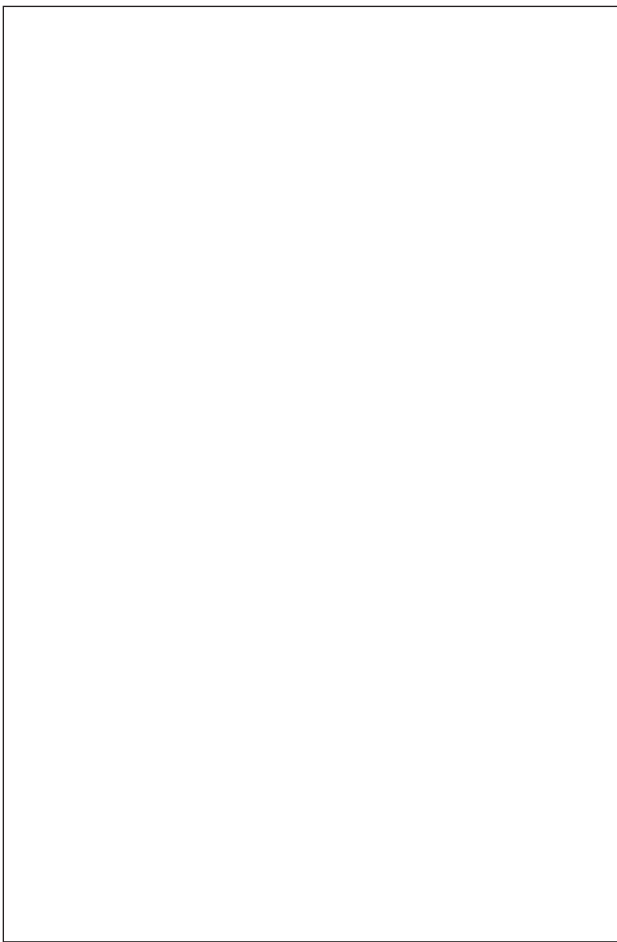
55 bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*, 52.

56 Ibid., 53.

57 Ibid., 55.

58 Ibid., 71.

59 Betsy Saar, “Influences: Betsy Saar. The US artist reflects on the art and events that have shaped a career spanning almost seven decades.” *Frieze*, September 2016.



Betye Saar, *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* (1972) *

Her iconic piece “The Liberation of Aunt Jemima” from 1972, came into being four years after the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., when she used a found “mammy” figurine, a caricature of a Black slave, and subverted the racist image into a Black hero: *She had a broom in one hand and, on the other side, I gave her a rifle. In front of her, I placed a little postcard, of a mammy with a mulatto child, which is another way black women were exploited during slavery. I used the derogatory image to empower the black woman by making her a revolutionary, like*

60 Ibid.

61 Alexxa Gotthardt, “How Betye Saar Transformed Aunt Jemima into a Symbol of Black Power.” Artsy, 2017.

62 Saar, “Influences.”

she was rebelling against her past enslavement, Betye Saar wrote more than four decades after the piece was created.⁶⁰

These “mammy” figurines first emerged in the 18th century and were grotesquely stereotyped and commercialised items (such as broom containers or pencil holders) or images of Black women used to sell kitchen products and objects that “served” their owners. In an almost perverse manner, these items were “placeholders”, “empty containers” for the everyday usage of the white owners.⁶¹ This aspect can be closely linked to bell hooks statement that Black women weren’t seen as women, rather as sub-human creatures — in this case, commercialised reifications of racist stereotypes.

Later on, legendary Civil Rights activist Angela Davis — at the opening of the exhibition “WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution” at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in 2007 — stated that the Black Women’s Movement started with “The Liberation of Aunt Jemima.”⁶² This direct link between “Aunt Jemima” and the Black Women’s Movement is of course not a coincidence given the powerful interruption, and subversion of racist stereotypes through the artistic work — that renegotiates and challenges these embedded ideologies of Black women as devalued creatures on a representational level.

However, a look into the arguments brought forth by sociologist and economic historian Immanuel Wallerstein explains why racialised depictions and devaluation of Black and Brown labour power is so persistent. Wallerstein argues that the logic of capitalism with its ultimate goal of unlimited accumulation of capital has an interest not in “ejecting” (death being the extremest version of ejection) of certain racialised

groups from the system, but rather in perpetuating the devaluation of their labour. “We lose the labour-power of the person ejected and therefore that person's contribution to the creation of a surplus that we might be able to appropriate on a recurring basis.”⁶³ Due to the expansion of the capitalist system in constant need of a growing body of labour-power, then the ejection of potential new workers counters the logic of capitalism.⁶⁴

*If one wants to maximize the accumulation of capital, it is necessary simultaneously to minimize the cost of production (hence the cost of labour-power) and minimize the costs of political disruption (...). Racism is the magic formula that reconciles these objectives.*⁶⁵

The same way that sexism renders (white and Black) women's labour as “non-work” or as inferior and less valued than the labour of men, racism allows for a far lower reward to a major segment of the workforce⁶⁶ — fostering an exploitative and oppressive axis of racism-sexism that are “intimately and conceptually tied to each other.”⁶⁷

In direct response to White feminists insistence that race and sex were two separate issues, and to Black activists who saw racism and not sexism as the main source of oppression, bell hooks voiced to both groups her conviction that “the struggle to end racism and the struggle to end sexism were naturally intertwined — to make them separate was to deny the basic truth of our existence, that race and sex are both immutable facets of human identity.”⁶⁸

Seven years later, in 1989, lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality, to reflect on the interlocking effects of oppression.⁶⁹

These ideologies of devaluation in regards to race, gender, and class — that intersect

powerfully in Saar's artistic work — find their roots in the emergence of the patriarchal-capitalist mode of production with the social reordering within Europe, the US and the colonies which they “conquered”. Feminist scholar Maria Mies makes the convincing argument that colonization must be regarded as the flipside to “housewifization”:⁷⁰

*It is my thesis that these two processes of colonization and housewifization are closely and causally interlinked. Without the ongoing exploitation of external colonies - formerly as direct colonies, today within the new international division of labour - the establishment of the “internal colony”, that is, a nuclear family and a woman maintained by a male “breadwinner”, would not have been possible.*⁷¹

Similarly, Silvia Federici chose the figures of “The Caliban and the Witch” from Shakespeare's “The Tempest”, as the two rebel figures of capitalist resistance for her book from 2004 with the same title. For her, the caliban is an anti-colonial rebel who is also a symbol for the world proletariat; whose body is equally “a terrain and an instrument of resistance to the logic of capitalism.”⁷² Contrary to “The Tempest”, where the witch is confined to the background, Federici aims to bring this figure to the centre-stage — as an embodiment of a range of female

63 Etienne Balibar, and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous identities*, 1991, 33.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid., 34.

67 Ibid., 36.

68 bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*, 12-13.

69 Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, no 1 (1989).

70 Nancy Fraser, “Crisis of Care? On the Social-Reproductive Contradictions of Contemporary Capitalism,” in *Social Reproduction Theory. Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*, ed. Tithi Bhattacharya (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 27.

71 Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation*, 110.

72 Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 11.

subjects, such as healers, disobedient wives, and as women who dared to live independently, who capitalism sought to destroy.⁷³

Both for the symbolic figures of the Witch and the Caliban, *we have the forcible removal of entire communities from their land, large-scale impoverishment, the launching of “Christianizing” campaigns destroying people’s autonomy and communal relations. We also have a constant cross-fertilization whereby forms of repression that had been developed in the Old World were transported to the New and then re-imported into Europe.*⁷⁴

Interestingly, these repressive ideologies — as ways of devaluing certain forms of labour, and hence enabling an “economy of invisible hands” — had become quite influential, despite them being “just that— ideology, not lived reality,”⁷⁵ as historian Susie L. Steinbach concludes. Nancy Fraser agrees that the theory behind social reproduction only partially aligned with everyday lives, as these activities were not exclusively bound to the private sphere, but rather expanded into the public realm, including neighbourhoods, civil society, and public institutions — while some of this labour had already been outsourced/commodified.⁷⁶ Immanuel Wallerstein confirms these two assessments by arguing that “none of this reflects working reality. But it does all add up to an ideology which is extremely powerful, and which all fits together.”⁷⁷

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 168.

76 Fraser, *Capitalism’s Crisis of Care*.

77 Balibar, and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, 35.

78 Isabelle Graw, “Value on Shaky Grounds,” Unpublished Manuscript, 2021.

79 Ibid.

80 Linda Nochlin, *Women, Art, And Power And Other Essays*, 2018.

These ideological forces do not halt in front the mechanisms of value production within the arts. Also here, deviations from the longstanding ideal of the white, male artist genius — such as Black artists, women artists, artists with caring responsibilities — encounter structural obstacles that continue to mark their success as an “exception,” as Isabelle Graw articulates in her lecture “Value on Shaky Grounds.”⁷⁸ The value of an art work — as the measurement of success within capitalism — is closely connected to the biography of the author. *Once an artwork sparks ‘fictional expectations’ the desire for it will intensify. So whether the artwork will be enriched with value or whether it won’t be considered valuable depends on the recipient’s projections about its future worth and credibility. Now these fictional expectations are of course not equally distributed (...).*⁷⁹

In reference to male and female soccer players, the payment of men is rooted in their future expectations, while female players first have to prove their abilities and are still questioned, whether their success could be repeated in the future. Black and women artists, according to Graw, have experienced this lack of trust for a long time, reflecting what Linda Nochlin has referred to as “unacknowledged value systems.”⁸⁰

Thus, fictive speculations about the author affect the value generation of the artwork — the artist functions as a guarantor of the value-form. In the case of Black or women artist, Graw speaks of value discrimination that echo deeply rooted systemic racism and sexism.⁸¹ The art theorist and critic concludes, *As for the artworld we also shouldn’t forget that this is a social universe that relies on unjustly distributed values, on a certain degree of value discrimination if you wish. One could even go so far to say that structurally speaking every market*

*successful position here is reached at the expense of all those positions that remain invisible.*⁸²

Arguably, artists with caring responsibilities could be seen as a specific kind of artist who also suffer from value discrimination due to lack of trust, due to rather grim “fictional expectations” associated with them — as has been contested in the example of Hannah Cooke or initiatives such as “Mehr Mütter für die Kunst” (see subchapter 1.1). This association between care as an inherently “unproductive” trait becomes apparent within the art system, society and economy at large, and seems to be rooted in the racialised and gendered history of capitalism and its prevailing ideologies that shape the mechanism of value distribution.

1.4 (Re)production Unit: Nuclear Family as Institution (20th–21st Century)

After the Great Depression in the US and the second World War, states had to save themselves from capitalism's self-destabilising elements, by focusing on “public welfare”. Particularly the working classes were no longer able to sustain their lives on their own, “[i]n this situation, social reproduction had to be internalised, brought within the officially managed domain of the capitalist order.”⁸³ Governments consequently saw the need to invest in health care, schooling, childcare and old-age pensions, supplemented by corporate provision.⁸⁴ State policies of the 20th century furthermore build on the Victorian model of separate spheres, promoting a seemingly more modern ideal of the “family wage”, which again, only few families were able to achieve.⁸⁵

Therefore, despite the ideologies of separate spheres being “just ideologies”, these Victorian narratives continued to be

upheld within the nuclear family as a “key institutional structures of the world-economy.”⁸⁶ The creation of the “intermediate household”, as Immanuel Wallerstein calls it, serves the capitalist system as a way to “break with the older “community” forms of labour-force organization.”⁸⁷ Silvia Federici and Nicole Cox argue that the nuclear family — as an invention of “capital for capital”⁸⁸ — serves as the institutionalisation of women's wageless labour and their dependence on men, but consequently also serves as a means to disciplining men: *For our wagelessness, our dependence in the home, has functioned to keep the men tied to their jobs, by ensuring that whenever they wanted to refuse their work they would be faced with the wife and children who depended on their wage.*⁸⁹

The nuclear family hence secures the status quo, whilst it upholding heteronormative ideas of gendered and sexual norms.⁹⁰

Queer sociologist Alan Sears argues that heteronormativity serves to naturalise and externalize forms of sexuality that are culturally and historically specific, “framing particular household forms and divisions of labour as products of human nature and as necessary foundations for a healthy human

81 Graw, “Value on Shaky Grounds.”

82 Ibid.

83 Fraser, “Contradictions of Capital and Care,” 109.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid., 104.

86 Balibar, and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, 107.

87 Ibid., 112.

88 Nicole Cox, and Silvia Federici, *Counter-Planning From the Kitchen*, (New York/ London: New York Wages for Housework Committee and Falling Wall Press, 1975), 7.

89 Ibid.

90 These ideological, normative approaches can be found in exhibitions of the post-war era, for example the historically significant show at MoMA “Family of Man” (1955), which toured the world for eight years and attracted 9 million visitors. The exhibition set out to reflect on the “universal human experience” through photography installations with the intention to ignite solidarity and pacifism. However, a range of cultural theorists such as Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag critiqued the curatorial undertaking as “mythical” and oversimplified, not acknowledging the differences and injustices that are contained in the lived realities around the globe.

society across time.”⁹¹ Thus heterosexuality — which arose as a concept in the late 19th century⁹² — formed one element of heteronormativity in order to regulate sexual activities and to articulate and strengthen gendered norms that would justify “free” labour within the capitalist system.⁹³

This is why conservative forces today have a strong and explicit interest in, literally, conserving the nuclear family as a way to maintain a specific social order that entails racialised and gendered power relations, and ensures the reproduction of the next generation of like-minded workers.

*Drug users, abortion seekers, sexually active single women, black mothers, femmes who defend themselves against men, sex workers, and undocumented migrants are the most frequently incarcerated violators of this parenting norm. They have not been shielded by the fact that the Family today is now no longer necessarily heterosexual, with states increasingly making concessions to the “homonormative” household through policy on gay marriage, as Sophie Lewis states.*⁹⁴

The queering of families to include same-sex partnership and parenthood (so-called “rainbow families”), single-parents, solo-moms who choose to reproduce via sperm donors, “chosen families” and kinships can be seen as an alternative towards strong support networks, largely outside of genetic relatives. However, queer

families are often framed as deviations, even as attacks not only the nuclear family as such but as an attack on social norms all together, that heavily rely on the social reproduction of the traditional family as the backbone of its social, political and economic order.

The ideology of gendered spheres and sexual politics seems to prevail particularly persistently in today's Germany, leading to the continued aspiration of the ideal of nuclear family, enabled and re-enforced through invisible juridical infrastructures that contain and punish deviations from this social norm of the so-called nuclear family.

A key element of the German tax system is the Ehegattensplitting [spousal splitting], a practice that financially rewards asymmetrical income structures in a married household, in most cases to the expense of women, who continue to perform most of the unpaid care work at home and who enter part-time positions more frequently, and due to the Gender Pay Gap tend to earn less than their spouses. This tax model *makes it economically unattractive to break away from the norms of the 1950s, to which the tax system still corresponds with regard to marriage taxation. Thus, the single-earner-and-housewife-marriage is preserved — contrary to the clearly modernized social ideas.*⁹⁵

It comes as no surprise that this tax model originates in the 19th century of Preußen, where taxes were due depending on the household form. Despite efforts to abolish joint taxation of married couples in 1920s, the Nazi-regime restricted these efforts again and introduced joint taxation and higher progression in 1934 — certainly with the aim of keeping women out of the labour force in accordance with Nazi family

91 Alan Sears, “Body Politics: The Social Reproduction of Sexualities,” in *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentring Oppression*, ed. Tithi Bhattacharya (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 172.

92 Gayle S. Rubin, “Deviations,” (2011), 89.

93 Sears, “Body Politics: The Social Reproduction of Sexualities,” 173.

94 Lewis, *Full Surrogacy Now*.

95 Gunda-Werner-Institut, “Weder fair noch sachgerecht: Das Ehegattensplitting steht contra Gleichstellung, Teilhabe und soziale Gerechtigkeit,” (2010).

ideology.⁹⁶ After the Second World War, the new German government took over this tax model — yet in 1957, the Federal Constitutional Court ruled that joint assessment in the form practised until then violated the constitutional protection of marriage, because spouses should not suffer any systematic disadvantages as a result of their marriage.⁹⁷

The adjustments to the legislation, however, continue to cater to the ideal of the family wage of the industrial era, a timeframe which Nancy Fraser refers to as “state-managed capitalism.” As she explains, *[i]n this world people were supposed to be organized into heterosexual, male-headed nuclear families, which lived principally from the man's labor market earnings. The male head of the household would be paid a family wage, sufficient to support children and a wife-and-mother, who performed domestic labor without pay.*⁹⁸

Many welfare programmes in European countries are driven by pronatalist agendas born of interstate competition, thereby distinguishing between mother's pensions and entitlements tied to wage work.⁹⁹ These policy approaches validate, assume, and encourage the family-wage by a commonly male “breadwinner”.

The contemporary tax model cements the dependency of women to the men's income, which has far reaching economic consequences particularly in case of divorce and is connected to women's old age poverty (as pensions are measured by the income over one's lifespan).¹⁰⁰ The defenders of the Ehegattensplitting, argue that it supports families — yet the numbers show that 43% of the married couples who benefit from the tax alleviations are childless.¹⁰¹ While unmarried couples with children do not benefit from the tax model. This points to

the double-standard of German legislation where beneficial tax treatment is only granted to married couples, yet for social legislation unmarried partners are regarded as “marriage-like communal households” (i.e. in the case an individual applies for social benefits, her unmarried partner is equally liable financially for the other person).¹⁰²

A similar double standard can be observed in the tax legislation for single parents. For one-parent-families, who deviate from the norm of the nuclear family, a special tax benefit model was created — which, however, only remains in effect as long as the single parent does not live in a household with another adult, independent from whether this relationship is romantic, married, familiar, or social. As a consequence, if a single parent were to choose to live with friends or family as a support structure, they lose the tax benefits — even though the grouping with other adults might only bear social and not financial merits.¹⁰³

As feminists across the globe contest, governments continue to have too much control over women's bodies and reproductive rights. Such rights are limited by heteronormative morals that shape, i.e. regulations in regards to in vitro fertilisation

96 Gunda-Werner-Institut, “Geschichte des Ehegattensplitting: Von der Nicht-Diskriminierung von Paaren zur Diskriminierung von Individuen,” (2010).

97 Ibid.

98 Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism. From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*, (London: Verso, 2013), 4.

99 Fraser, “Crisis of Care?,” 31.

100 Gunda-Werner-Institut, “Weder fair noch sachgerecht.”

101 Gunda-Werner-Institut, “Geschichte des Ehegattensplitting.”

102 Gunda-Werner-Institut, “Weder fair noch sachgerecht.”

103 Ibid.

(IVF) treatments. The German health care system covers parts of the costs for married heterosexual couples, making it utterly difficult for single women or same-sex couples to reproduce in case of impacted fertility.¹⁰⁴

This (state) control takes the form of invisible laws, regulations, subventions, tax benefits, and tax losses that shape and uphold the ideal of the nuclear family; its moral and sexual codes, and mechanisms of control of women's bodies and social norms continue to lie at the centre of many Western nation states and their former colonies. Deviations from this norm, in form of communal, queer, non-traditional forms of care are economically, socio-politically sanctioned, yet, in various forms of activism, even criminalised.¹⁰⁵ Hence, it comes as no surprise that

104 Israel offers nearly full coverage for IVF treatments to any Israeli woman irrespective of her marital status or sexual orientation, until she has two children with her current partner. Consequently, Israeli women are the world's most intensive consumers of IVF, forming part of the governments "pro-natalists" mission, which cannot be considered outside of the countries Zionist vision to shape the demographic future of the land. State of Israel, "IVF- In Vitro Fertilization", Ministry of Health, 2021; Daphna Birenbaum-Carmeli, and Martha Dirnfeld, "In vitro fertilisation policy in Israel and women's perspectives: the more the better," *Reproductive Health Matters* 16, no. 31 (2008).

105 The research collective "Pirate Care" has addressed the relationship between care/violence, solidarity/criminalization in their artistic/curatorial/activist practices and their writings, e.g. Valeria Graziano, Marcell Mars, and Tomislav Medak (Pirate Care), "Care and its Discontents." *Caring* edition, *Haus der Kulturen der Welt, New Alphabet School Blog*, 2020.

106 Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2014.

Federici and Cox also elaborate on the importance of politicizing the domestic sphere as a source for broader societal transformation: "Since the left has accepted the wage as the dividing line between work and non-work, production and parasitism, potential power and absolute powerlessness, the enormous amount of wageless work women perform for capital within the home has totally escaped their analysis and strategy. Thus, from Lenin through Gramsci to Benston and Mitchell, the entire leftist tradition has agreed on the 'marginality' of housework to the reproduction of capital and, consequently, the marginality of the housewife to revolutionary struggle. According to the left, as housewives women are not suffering from capital, but are suffering precisely from the absence of it. Our problem, it seems, is that capital has failed to reach into and organize our kitchens and bedrooms, with the two-fold consequence that a) we presumably live at a feudal or at any rate precapitalist stage; b) whatever we do in these kitchens and bedrooms is at best irrelevant to any real social change. For obviously, if our kitchens are outside of capital, our struggle to destroy them will never succeed in causing capital to fall." See Nicole Cox, and Silvia Federici, *Counter-Planning From the Kitchen*, 2.

107 Emma Dowling, *The Care Crisis: What Caused It and How Can We End It?* (London: Verso, 2020).

the slogan "the personal is political" has become so crucial for feminist movements, demanding to regard the so-called private sphere as a realm of broader political concern;¹⁰⁶ thereby challenging the history and the status quo of gendered norms with its sexual division of labour, women's economic (in)dependence, reproductive rights, and protection against domestic violence.¹⁰⁷

To summarise the previous sections of this chapter, the contemporary conditions of private care-work with its structural injustices have to be regarded as a historically grown system that cannot be thought of outside of larger political and economic conditions and social norms. Despite seemingly liberal, secular state politics a continued interest in upholding normative ideals of gender, reproductive rights, and the nuclear family prevail — which, to a large extent, are co-controlled by governments and state legislations. From this perspective, the field of (private) care is rendered legible as a prism through which intersecting forms of oppression can be understood and contested, as the "Wages for Housework" movement has aimed to do.

* While Betsy Saars' artwork "The Liberation of Aunt Jemima" (1927) played a radical role in the Black Liberation movement in the US, it may contain sensitive imagery for BPOC readers. We therefore chose to not reproduce the image in the context of this draft; however, we also do not want to censor this revolutionary art work. After in-depth conversations amongst FIELD NARRATIVES we have chosen to make the image accessible via QR code – for the ones who wish to engage further with the image. The code links to the website of The Berkeley Revolution Archive, which includes a longer statement by the artist Betsy Saar about the creation and the political context of the work.



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